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517 As has been said, the Min Chia have the Chinese respect for learning, but this does not mean that they are very given to intellectual pursuits. Few men read for pleasure, perhaps because the conditions in which they live make it really difficult to do so, or because the constant study of their youth has sickened them. The literature of China is not all solemn philosophy or learned historical commentary. It contains many famous novels and collections of short stories, as well as the works in this vein of modern writers. All these books can be bought quite cheaply in Ta Li city, and are in fact read, but by students, rarely by grown men. It may well be that the younger generation, taught by more modern methods using the current rather than the classical literature, reads with more facility than their elders, and also finds reading more congenial, since they have not wearisome memories of learning classical works by heart before they could understand one word of the text. Whether inspired by duty or pleasure, the only people seen constantly reading, and frequenting the bookshops, are the young.

Almost the only place where a man can get sufficient light to read, or a woman to sew, in a Min Chia home, is the verandah which surrounds the inside of the courtyard, and from which the rooms open off. It might be thought that in a climate like that of Ta Li, when on most days of the year it is pleasant to sit out either in the shade or in the warm winter sun, the Min Chia would make some comfortable way of using the courtyard verandah. But in practice, though they sit there most of the day, they use no chair or couch, but squat down on tiny stools leaning precariously against the columns which support the gallery overhead. Here the older ladies sew and gossip while the children play in the courtyard, the younger women chop wood, wash clothes, thresh grain and do their other

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domestic tasks. The courtyard is the real centre of the family life, where everything from the baby's toilet to the ceremonies of Ancestor Worship takes place.

Labour is cheap in Yunnan, but strangely enough even the wealthiest families have hardly any servants. The women of the family, especially the daughters-in-law and unmarried girls do the house work, cook, sweep the courtyard, and wait at table on the men, except when guests are invited. Then the young sons do the waiting at table, such as there is. Even the richest families rarely have more than one servant, to feed pigs and do the roughest work, and she is always a "*ya t'ou*," that is to say a slave girl. This system, which resembles the Mui Tsai of south China, but is hardly found in north China at all, is less practised by the Min Chia than in other parts of Yunnan, notably K'un Ming, where almost the only servants obtainable are slave girls. Slave girls are almost invariably cretinous or dwarfed individuals, who, coming from the poor families where goitre and the consequent cretinism is common, are too deformed, stupid, and unattractive to be married. For it must be remembered that a man has to pay for his bride, and few are willing to marry a cretinous dwarf. Such girls are therefore sold by their parents to the wealthy families as slaves, for life, although it is customary to give them some small remuneration, and if possible, to find them a husband when they are adult. Among the Min Chia of the Ta Li plain, where goitre and cretinism are less prevalent than in the mountain valleys, only a small number of the richer families have slave girls, and perhaps because Min Chia women are more independent in character than the other peoples of Yunnan, the slaves in Ta Li are on the whole much better treated than, for example, they are in K'un Ming. On the other hand the fact that all servants are slave girls, and the independent character of the Min

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732 Chia women, make it quite impossible to obtain normal
357 girls as domestic servants for wages. A rich family may
567 thus be able and willing to pay wages and hire servants, but none can be found, except slaves, who are too stupid to do more than the crudest tasks.

• 517 In Ta Li, where there are no regular theatres playing at
574 all times, the principal recreation and entertainment of the
252 well to do is feasting. Every family gives parties at frequent intervals, and the male members are constantly being invited out to the homes of their friends and relatives. Women also go out to feasts, but more rarely, on important occasions such as a marriage, the birth of an heir, or the anniversary of some important relative. In most parts of China it is customary for the men to entertain their guests at a restaurant, but in Ta Li, where the only restaurants are the rather simple places catering for travellers, feasts are always given in the home. In certain cases where the family is a small one, and the kitchen not adequate, the food is sent in from a restaurant, but in the larger houses it is prepared by the women of the household themselves. As they do not sit down with the men and guests, they have plenty of time to cook the elaborate dishes served on these occasions.

574 The meal is served in the guest room, which as has been pointed out, is also the only sitting room in the house. Guests are invited for four or five in the afternoon, but no one arrives until at least half an hour, or more usually an hour, after the time named. The invitation card is sent round the day before with all the names of those to be invited written on it. In this way a guest can see who he is going to meet, and can avoid someone he dislikes by declining the invitation. This admirable custom might with advantage be adopted elsewhere. Eight, or at the outside ten, can find room at the round tables used for Min Chia feasts, and unless the party is a celebration for some important occasion, not

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as he plows, and it is asserted that the animals cease pulling when the plowman stops singing. 412

In every home there is a square hole in the ground filled with dirt and ashes. This is a very simple stove, and probably has been used for centuries. Similar stoves are found in the temples in or near the sacred groves. In this square there is often an iron stove that consists of a circle about three feet in diameter resting on three iron legs equal distances apart. There are three iron pieces extending from these three legs towards the center, but not meeting. These three pieces hold the cooking vessel above the fire. The writer has seen similar iron stoves among the Lolos of the Ningyuan valley. Probably the ancient form of this stove was three pieces of stone chipped into triangles so that if placed equal distances apart one part of each stone can serve as a leg, and the other in the center hold up the cooking vessel. The stoves in the temples in and near the sacred groves consist of three such stones each. In many homes there are now typical Chinese stoves made of stones, lime, and clay, with two or three fire-holes over which iron kos or cooking vessels can be placed. There are no chimneys, and the smoke goes back out of the stove into the room. In the ko food is boiled fried, and baked. Large [252] wooden dippers are used to pour in and dip out water and other liquids, and iron dippers and ladels are used to stir the hot food, turn it over, or dip it out.

Ladders are generally trees in which large notches have been cut, a type of ladder that is widely used in the highlands of west China. 417

The walls of the Ch'iang homes are innocent of any pictures that might beautify them, and are blackened with smoke from [532] incense, candles, lamps, and fires.

IV. Social Cutoms.

1. Social Life

The Ch'iang lead a simple social life. There are no theatricals excepting those given in the Chinese cities and villlages. There are no social dances excepting near Chiu Tzu T'un. There is a taboo against using the funeral dance at any other time. One is tempted to conclude that the Ch'iang do not know how to play. The playthings of the children are often pebbles or broken tiles. When at leisure the 517

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517 men sit and smoke and gossip, and the women spin yarn of hemp thread, make shoes or embroidery, or sew clothing.

527 During the first moon families invite friends and relatives [525] to a feast where they eat, smoke, talk, and drink wine. There is very little gambling. At this time people may amuse themselves by "playing lion," when two men covered by an imitation lion's skin dance about and fight with a man who always conquers the lion.

517 While working in the fields, tending their flocks, gathering wood or working in their homes, men and women talk and sing songs. When bringing home loads of wood or corn or some other produce they [562] may stop at a convenient resting-place and chat. There is considerable freedom between the sexes--that is, they visit and talk freely together, with comparatively little sexual irregularity.

535 171 At Chiu Tzu T'un in 1933 the writer witnessed a dance by twelve women and six men. The women were lined up on the right and the men on the left. First the men would sing a line of a song, dancing rhythmically, and waving their arms from side to side. Occasionally there was a slight, quick lowering of the body. There were graceful steps in unison, a swaying of the body, and a stamping of the feet. While singing each line each person turned around com- [415] pletely one time. It was both interesting and graceful. There was a jar of wine from which the performers drank through small bamboo tubes. As the wine became low, fresh water was poured into the jar. The dance was led by a female relative of the local ruler. Since she was a Jia Rung, and the Jia Rung are very near, since the dance is lacking in other parts of the Ch'iang region, and since it very closely resembles the Jia Rung dance, it seems safe to assume that this dance was borrowed from the Jia Rung.

2. Engagements.

584 Sometimes through singing "Mountain songs" or otherwise a young man and a young women become attached to each other and desire to get married. In that case they must request their parents to appoint middle men to make the necessary arrangements, and the consent of the two families must be obtained.

In Ch'iang engagements middle men are always necessary. Marriage is not an individual, but a family affair. Generally the young people are not given a choice, but the choice is made for them. A